

The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

Foreign Language Committee

Serial: FLC-025-88
16 September 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR:

[redacted] III, Chairman,
Research and Technology Subcommittee

FROM:

[redacted] Chairman
DCI Foreign Language Committee

SUBJECT:

Creation of a Natural Language Processing
Working Group

1. Currently within the Intelligence Community (IC), there are a variety of agencies and individuals who have a responsibility for monitoring and exploring natural language processing techniques. Because of uniqueness of mission, each views new technical developments from the perspective of the organization in which the function resides. There is no Community focus, for no one in the Community oversees this activity or is cognizant of the marvelous improvements being made in language processing. There is little sharing of information or techniques and what sharing does occur appears to be incidental and personality driven. The lack of shared information, cooperative planning and resource pooling thwarts the Community's ability to maximize its language resource utilization.

2. In an era of stringent budgetary constraints, it is essential to obtain the greatest benefit from every dollar spent. This is especially true in the area of language processing research, development and implementation. Duplication of effort due to parochial interests or lack of communication can no longer be tolerated. Nor is it possible any longer for an organization or agency to fund all the projects it wants to alone. A mechanism is needed at the IC level to encourage cooperation across agencies, where charter and security concerns do not prohibit.

3. Accordingly, the primary task of the Research and Technology Subcommittee (RTS) for FY-1989 is to establish a Natural Language Processing Working Group comprised of representatives from the members of the IC, as appropriate. The responsibilities of the Working Group will be to:

- * Identify research, development and implementation of language processing projects anticipated by or underway at each IC agency;
- * Identify those areas where more than one agency has the same or a similar need;
- * Create an atmosphere for sharing across agencies, already developed and tested language processing systems and techniques;
- * Provide a mechanism for sharing information on technological advances in the area of present and future language processing systems;
- * Develop a personnel exchange program to increase the cadre of applied language scientists available within the IC and reduce its reliance on contractor expertise;
- * Select at least one joint project in each fiscal year in each of the following categories:
1) research, 2) development and piloting, and
3) implementation;
- * Provide periodic status and annual reports to the Foreign Language Committee through the executive secretary.

4. As the RTS Chairman, you or your designee will be expected to submit a budget proposal to the chairman and to manage any funds allocated for the Working Group, organize and chair meetings, coordinate inter-agency visits and the sharing of personnel and other resources, handle the paper flow, and document savings realized through the Working Group's activities.

5. In staffing the Working Group, please request the NFIC principals to designate representatives. As one of the first orders of business, we ask that the Working Group undertake an examination of the ALPS Systems. The National Cryptologic School has been working with ALPS since 1983, developing a machine assisted translation (MAT) system for implementation in a training mode, first in Spanish, then in other Romance languages, and now in languages which use non-Roman scripts. After investing several million dollars and

a couple of years of research, CIA/OSO has made noteworthy progress in using ALPS technology as a means to process SIGINT more effectively. Both are willing to share their projects, perhaps with the hope of finding Community partners to help refine the systems and Community funding to underwrite further development costs.

6. The above responds to your query at the most recent meeting of the Foreign Language Committee.



Chairman

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